countries through Indian missions in those countries that the various Export Promotion Schemes are not in the nature of subsidies.

Free Import of Oilseeds

1564. SHRI E. BALANANDAN:

SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the Address made my noted ecologist, Dr. Vandana Shiva in a Press Conference that Government's decision to free import of oilseeds especially soyabeans on one hand and banning the sale of mustard oil on the other, was not coincidental;

(b) whether the only visible beneficiary of the tragedy has been the International Soyabean Lobby who are using the market opening to push its genetically engineered stock into the Indian market; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Import of soyabean in split and cracked form, sunflower and rapeseed have been permitted for import subject to plant quarantine conditions in order to enhance the availability of edible oil in the domestic market, increase capacity utilisation of processing mills and generate additional exports of oilmeals. The ban on sale of mustard oil was on account of adulteration in the mustard oil.

(b) and (c) Consignments not meeting the plant quarantine conditions and other human, animal and plant safety norms would be appropriately dealt with by the authorities through measures including but not limited to, denial of entry at the port of disembarkment and/or reshipment. The Government has also issued orders for compulsory packaging of Edible oils. The actual import of oilseeds would depend not only on the domestic availability but also on the availability and prices prevailing in the international markets.

Plan for Promotion of Farm Exports

1565. DR. MOHAN BABU : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have drawn up a comprehensive plan for promotion of farm exports;

(b) if so, the details thereof and how best the plan would help in increasing India's present poor share in world trade; and

(c) the extent to which the comprehensive plan would boost country's foreign exchange earnings?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE): (a) and (b) Policy of exports of agricultural products forms an integral part of the Export Import Policy of the country. The Policy regarding exports of agricultural products is governed principally by the concern of India's food security, maximising farm incomes and earning foreign exchange. Review of export performance of agricultural products is an on-going process and accordingly policy interventions are made, as and when considered necessary with a view to making agricultural exports increasingly viable.

Some of the steps taken/proposed to be taken to enhance exports of farm goods include:

1. Providing assistance for raising small and large nurseries for production of good quality planting material, upgradation of technical know how of farmers through demonstrations, trainings and publicity, rejuvenation of old orchards, area expansion, supply of minikits for vegetables, improving productivity and training of farmers.

2. Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres, auction platforms, ripening/curing chambers and quality testing equipment.

3. Providing financial assistance to exporters/growers/Cooperative Societies for development of infrastructural facilities such as purchase of specialised transport units, establishment of pre-cooling/ cold storage facilities, integrated post-harvest handling systems (pack houses).

4. Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control and modernization of processing units.

5. Establishment of vapour heat treatment facilities for improving the acceptability of the product especially the mangoes in overseas markets.

6. Grant of Air Freight Subsidy for exports of floricultural items and selected fresh fruits and vegetables.

7. Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important international fairs and exhibitions.

8. Setting up of integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various international Airports for handling export of perishable items such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

9. Providing assistance in development of data base and dissemination of market information.

10. Providing assistance for setting up of laboratories for testing of products to ensure quality, technology transfer, process upgradation and product development.

(c) It is difficult to estimate the extent to which such measures would boost country's foreign exchange earnings as exports would depend on international demand and supply position, international and domestic prices, surprises available for exports, production of farm goods meeting the quality standards of overseas buyers, consumer preferences and terms of trade.

India's commitment to WTO

1566. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to an editorial published in the Hindustan Times, dated the 21st November, 1998 captioned "Patently Slow" with regard to India's commitment to the WTO to bring about requisite legislation/amendments in the Patents Act by April 19, 1999 but going very slow;

(b) whether the US have been resorting to unilateral actions against Indian exports and erecting non-tariff barriers; and

if so, what efforts Government have made so far to work out an agreed formula in the national interest while giving the country access to global trading system?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA KRISHNA HEDGE): (a) and (b) It has since been decided to introduce a Bill in Parliament to amend the Patents Act, 1970.

(b) and (c) US had taken measures under their national law to prohibit the import of shrimps from India and some other country if they are not harvested without using "turtle excluder devices". This was challenged in the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism by India and others. The WTO Panel and Appellate Body have ruled in India's favour and recommended that USA should bring its measures in conformity with WTO. The Government keeps national interests in view while addressing such unilateral actions.